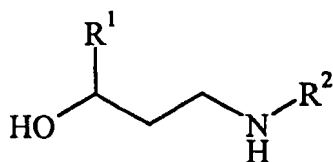


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This Listing Of Claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of the claims in the application.

Listing of the Claims:

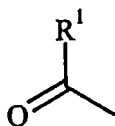
Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A process for the preparation of a compound of formula:



and/or an addition salt of a proton acid, wherein R¹ and R² ~~independently represent~~ represents alkyl, cycloalkyl, aryl or aralkyl, each aryl or aralkyl being optionally further substituted with alkyl, alkoxy and/or halogen, and R² represents C₁₋₈-alkyl or phenyl, which process comprises the following steps:

a) reacting a mixture comprising:

(i) a methyl ketone of formula:



wherein R¹ is as defined above, and

(ii) a compound of formula:

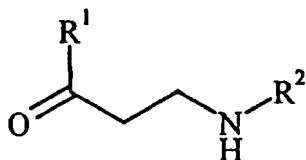


and/or an addition salt of proton acid, wherein R² is as defined above, and

(iii) formaldehyde or a source of formaldehyde selected from the group consisting of formaldehyde in aqueous solution, 1,3, 5-trioxane, paraformaldehyde and mixtures thereof, in the presence of

a solvent selected from the group consisting of water, aliphatic alcohols, cycloaliphatic alcohols and mixtures thereof, and
optionally a proton acid

to ~~afford~~ provide a β -keto amine of formula:



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and/or an addition salt of a proton acid, and

b) reducing the carbonyl group of β -keto amine to afford a compound of formula I, and/or an addition salt of a proton acid

wherein the step a) is carried out at a pressure above 1.5 bar.

Claim 2 (Original): The process of claim 1 wherein R^1 is selected from the group consisting of linear or branched C_{1-8} alkyl, C_{3-8} cycloalkyl, phenyl, naphthyl, furanyl, benzofuranyl, thienyl, benzo[b]thienyl and aralkyl, wherein the alkyl moiety of the aralkyl residue is linear C_{1-4} alkyl, and the aryl moiety is selected from the group consisting of phenyl, naphthyl, furanyl, benzofuranyl, thienyl and benzo[b]thienyl, each aryl or aralkyl being optionally substituted with halogen, linear or branched C_{1-4} alkyl, linear or branched C_{1-4} alkoxy, C_{3-6} cycloalkyl, CF_3 , C_2F_5 , OCF_3 or OC_2F_5 .

Claim 3 (Currently Amended): The process of claim 1 wherein R^2 is ~~selected from the group consisting of linear or branched C_{1-8} alkyl, C_{3-8} cycloalkyl, phenyl, naphthyl, furanyl, benzofuranyl, thienyl, benzo[b]thienyl and aralkyl, wherein the alkyl moiety of the aralkyl residue is linear C_{1-4} alkyl, and the aryl moiety is selected from the group consisting of phenyl, naphthyl, furanyl, benzofuranyl, thienyl and benzo[b]thienyl, each aryl or aralkyl being optionally substituted with halogen, linear or branched C_{1-4} alkyl, linear or branched C_{1-4} alkoxy, C_{3-6} cycloalkyl, CF_3 , C_2F_5 , OCF_3 or OC_2F_5 .~~

Claim 4 (Previously Presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the compound of formula V is present in an amount at least equimolar to that of the compound of formula IV.

Claim 5 (Previously Presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the proton acid is a carboxylic or an inorganic acid, the acid being preferably selected from the group consisting of formic acid, acetic acid, propionic acid, oxalic acid, malonic acid, benzoic acid, HF, HCl, HBr, HI, H₂SO₄, H₃PO₄, mono alkali malonate, alkali hydrogensulfates, alkali hydrogenphosphates and alkali hydrogencarbonates.

Claim 6 (Previously Presented): The process of claim 1, wherein aliphatic and cycloaliphatic alcohols are selected from the group selected of linear or branched aliphatic C₁₋₁₂ alcohols, cycloaliphatic C₅₋₈ alcohols, di- and/or triethylene glycols and mono C₁₋₄ alkyl or acetyl derivatives thereof, each of said alcohols containing 1 to 3 hydroxy groups.

Claim 7 (Original): The process of claim 6, wherein the alcohol is selected from the group consisting of methanol, ethanol, propanol, isopropyl alcohol, butanol, isobutanol, tert-butanol, 1-pentanol, 2-pentanol, 3-pentanol, 1-hexanol, 2-hexanol, cyclopentanol, cyclohexanol, 1,2-ethanediol, 1, 2-propanediol, 1, 2-butanediol, 2,3-butanediol, 1,4-butanediol, 1,2,3-propanetriol, 1,2, 6-hexanetriol, diethylene glycol, diethylene glycol monomethyl ether, diethylene glycol monoethyl ether, diethylene glycol monobutyl ether, diethylene glycol monoacetate, triethylene glycol, triethylene glycol monomethyl ether, triethylene glycol monoethyl ether, triethylene glycol monobutyl ether and triethylene glycol monoacetate.

Claim 8 (Previously Presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the pressure during reaction step a) is in the range of 1.5 to 10 bar.

Claims 9 to 20 (Cancelled)

Claim 21 (Currently Amended): The process of claim 2 wherein R² is ~~selected from the group consisting of linear or branched C₁₋₈ alkyl, C₃₋₈ cycloalkyl, phenyl, naphthyl, furanyl, benzofuranyl, thienyl, benzo[b]thienyl and aralkyl, wherein the alkyl moiety of the aralkyl residue is linear C₁₋₄ alkyl, and the aryl moiety is selected from the group consisting of phenyl, naphthyl,~~

~~furanyl, benzofuranyl, thienyl and benzo[b]thienyl, each aryl or aralkyl being optionally substituted with halogen, linear or branched C₁₋₄-alkyl, linear or branched C₁₋₄-alkoxy, C₃₋₆ cycloalkyl, CF₃, C₂F₅, OCF₃ or OC₂F₅.~~

Claim 22 (Previously Presented): The process of claim 3, wherein the compound of formula V is present in an amount at least equimolar to that of the compound of formula IV.

Claim 23 (Previously Presented): The process of claim 4, wherein the proton acid is a carboxylic or an inorganic acid, the acid being preferably selected from the group consisting of formic acid, acetic acid, propionic acid, oxalic acid, malonic acid, benzoic acid, HF, HCl, HBr, HI, H₂SO₄, H₃PO₄, mono alkali malonate, alkali hydrogensulfates, alkali hydrogenphosphates and alkali hydrogencarbonates.

Claim 24 (Previously Presented): The process of claim 5, wherein aliphatic and cycloaliphatic alcohols are selected from the group selected of linear or branched aliphatic C₁₋₁₂ alcohols, cycloaliphatic C₅₋₈ alcohols, di- and/or triethylene glycols and mono C₁₋₄ alkyl or acetyl derivatives thereof, each of said alcohols containing 1 to 3 hydroxy groups.

Claim 25 (Previously Presented): The process of claim 7, wherein the pressure during reaction step a) is in the range of 1.5 to 10 bar.

Claims 26 to 30 (Cancelled)

Claim 31 (Previously Presented): The process of claim 8, wherein the pressure during reaction step a) is in the range of 1.5 to 5 bar.

Claim 32 (Previously Presented): The process of claim 25, wherein the pressure during reaction step a) is in the range of 1.5. to 5 bar.

Claim 33 (New): The process of Claim 1, wherein R² is phenyl.

Claim 34 (New): The process of Claim 2, wherein R² is phenyl.